

Monthly Report Feb&Mar'26 - Sproughton & Pinewood Ward

GENERAL UPDATES

The district wide monthly update can be found here - Download [Babergh's town & parish briefing notes](#).

Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation: There are going to be three unitaries for Suffolk!! The government listened and were convinced by the arguments from all the district councils. So, three unitary councils will be created in Suffolk replacing the current system made up of Suffolk County Council and the five district and borough councils: Babergh, East Suffolk, Ipswich, Mid Suffolk and West Suffolk. I firmly believe this will be better than one single unitary - it might not have quite the level of cost savings proposed by SCC but it will still be large enough to deliver complex statutory services efficiently but local enough to care, retaining strong ties to distinct communities, economies and geographies. One single unitary sounds too much like the existing county council - given the number of traffic, potholes & parking issues I get from residents that remain unresolved my confidence levels in the ability of what would have been a continuing council (I suspect) would have been low - not certain anything would have improved! But, anyhow, work on the new warding arrangements for a 'hoped for' three unitary model has been underway for several weeks - lots of moving things around to try to get roughly equal ward sizes and logical grouping of parishes in conjunction with having enough councillors to run a unitary effectively - there are a number of statutory & regular committees that are needed along with enough councillors to populate them while still allowing sufficient time for casework. Now we know the governments decision we will be ploughing ahead starting to work out what we can do now and what has to wait until after the unitary elections.

Better Recycling (formerly known as Simpler Recycling): Simpler Recycling has been renamed Better Recycling because it isn't really simpler but it is better in the sense that more is being collected for recycling. This new style of collection goes live in April next year with the introduction of food waste collection and restructuring of the remaining waste collections. More information can be found at [Future changes to bin collections - Babergh District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk](#) Hopefully the information packs will be out soon.

Joint Local Plan: Work is continuing on assessing the 1,100 sites submitted to Babergh & Mid-Suffolk this includes a re-assessment of the sites submitted in the first round. The settlement hierarchy is nearly finalised after that comes the spatial strategy. As a reminder (partly for my benefit!) - A **settlement hierarchy** is a way of ranking towns, villages and hamlets according to size, services and facilities and how accessible/connected they are. A **spatial strategy** sets out the big picture vision for how and where development should happen across the district so, how much development is needed (homes, jobs, infrastructure), where growth should be focused and which areas should be protected. We need to be prepared for more building around Ipswich and to argue for development to be appropriate in size, sustainable, with the right infrastructure - which is not just roads, but GP surgeries, dentists and schools. The planning system lacks common sense at points - apparently a developer contribution to the Integrated Care Board counts as health provision - it doesn't necessarily mean that doctors & nurses can be found to care for new populations 😞. I don't fully understand the way Highways evaluates planning applications (have actually asked for training on this) but the information that comes back seems to be light either and hence lots of questions get asked. At a recent planning committee meeting I asked for a deferral so that Highways could get some further data - which included asking the residents about the local parking situation. As a planning committee we want to make sensible well-informed decisions and that can't be done if information isn't available.

Monthly Report Feb&Mar'26 - Sproughton & Pinewood Ward

PORTFOLIO

Biodiversity: The Biodiversity Action Plan was presented to full cabinet in February and approved (😊). So, the team (all one of them) is now turning that into action. I am looking forward to seeing the results of that. I was also pleased when the Suffolk Environmental Portfolio Holder Group agreed in principle to work together on a common process for Habitat Banks - there's a way to go on this as I need more formal approval from individual district councils. However it seems logical to me to define something that can be used by more than one council - it will make it marginally easier from developers to meet their biodiversity net gain requirements. For those who aren't up to speed on habitat banks A habitat bank is a piece of land where habitats are created, restored, or enhanced, so that the resulting biodiversity gains can be sold as credits to developers who need to meet environmental requirements e.g. biodiversity net gain. Habitat banks are most commonly associated with Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), where developments must deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity, either on site or via off-site habitat banks. The land has to be looked after for 30years so it's a good long term solution to enabling nature recovery (lesson over).

THE WARD ITSELF

Parking at Suffolk One: I finally had a meeting with a designer from the Suffolk Highways Team. It seems a while since I submitted the paper to them. Unfortunately, there was a delay between my submitting the paper and it going to the relevant team for design & costing due to workload. I didn't find this out until I chased. However, the design team were more responsive, and I had a meeting with them on 17Mar26. The general idea is to split any improvements into two parts - this is down to what is easier to get approved and hence can be done first and the second which is more difficult. We still hit funding issues:-

1) Extend existing double yellow lines at particular junctions. This needs a legal agreement called a TRO to be put in place - this process requires a period of public consultation. Ballpark cost at around £15,000 most of which goes on legal & admin fees. I have offered to help to speed up the process. Can't start until after May elections and need part funding by whoever will be our next county councillor.

2) Implement single yellow lines with a parking restriction period. Similar to 1) in terms of process as a TRO is needed & public consultation. Funding is a tbd. Again, have offered to help (am quite happy to do the paperwork on this) and work cannot start until after the elections.

I have put out an email update to those who have emailed me on this just to keep everyone up to speed.

Traffic Solutions 4 Sproughton: Not much news on this - it has gone to the Safety & Speed team and I am waiting for feedback. After anything proposed needs to meet design regs, SCC policy and be approved by the Asset team before an estimate can be given - this is taking way too long but I will keep chasing.....

Sproughton Nature Reserve: The final version of the legal agreement was approved by IBC's Executive Committee at the March meeting. The agreement now must be sealed by both parties. Then everything goes to Natural England for review and designation. The Capel St Mary agreement is still going through the process - this one is simpler than the Sproughton one as it is not cross-boundary.

Gipping River Path: We are waiting for the ground to dry out so we can move the equipment across the fields to the river to repair the sleeper bridge by the river in Sproughton - shouldn't be too long before that can happen now.

Monthly Report Feb&Mar'26 - Sproughton & Pinewood Ward

Ipswich Flood Barrier

The old flood barrier is sited close to Boss Hall Road adjacent to the railway bridge. It seems to be a complicated process to look at removing this as a lot of people are involved - Babergh, Ipswich, Network Rail and the Environment Agency. To carry out works close to the railway, a detailed Basic Asset Protection Agreement (BAPA) must be submitted to Network Rail for assessment. Network Rail judge the level of risk to the railway - including whether demolition works could cause vibrations affecting track structures. Before a BAPA can be submitted, the exact options, feasibility and costs need to be understood. Suffolk County Council has agreed to fund a feasibility study and may ask the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (used to be Sustrans) to undertake it as a cost-effective option. An alternative idea of creating a bridge around the existing wall was considered by the Environment Agency (this was my 'cheap & cheerful' idea), but they concluded it would introduce greater flood-risk complications and be riskier and more expensive than removing the steps and wall if that proves feasible. Once options and costs are clear, the next step is to seek capital funding (with some pledged by SCC and potential CIL support), and if funding looks achievable, proceed with submitting the BAPA to Network Rail.

If you ever have an issue to raise with me please use the contact details below. I look forward to hearing from you.

Helen Davies

Councillor Helen Davies: District Councillor for Sproughton & Pinewood

Mobile: 07514 951190

E-mail: Helen.Davies@babergh.gov.uk

Facebook: Cllr Helen Davies

X: @HelenDSprougthn